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SUBJECT: SECRETARY RICE'S JUNE 18, 2008 CONVERSATION
WITH KENYAN PRIME MINISTER RAILA ODINGA

¶1. Classified by Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer for reason 1.4(d).

¶2. (U) June 18, 2008; 11:00 a.m.; Washington, DC.

¶3. (U) Participants:

U.S.
The Secretary
Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer
U.S. Ambassador to Kenya Michael Ranneberger
Rachel Meyers, AF/E Notetaker

Kenya
Prime Minister Raila Odinga
Minister of Transport Chirau Ali Mwakwere
Minister of Defense Yusuf Haji
Ambassador to the U.S. Peter Ogego
Ambassador Binsai Chepsongol, Head, Americas Division,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

¶4. (C) SUMMARY: The Secretary met Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga to reinforce our support for the fledgling coalition government, emphasize the importance we attach to the role of the Prime Minister, and urge Odinga to work with President Kibaki to make progress on Kenya's reform agenda. Odinga noted that the coalition members are sincere in their desire to collaborate and rebuild Kenya following the post-election crisis, and described their progress to date on the reform agenda. Odinga underscored his prior public comments on the situation in Zimbabwe and offered to reach out to other African leaders to urge them to speak out against President Mugabe's regime. Minister of Defense Yusuf Haji briefed the Secretary on allegations that Kenyan security forces were committing human rights abuses. END SUMMARY.

COALITION GOVERNMENT OFF TO A PRODUCTIVE START

¶5. (C) In response to the Secretary's question about the viability of the coalition government, Odinga said that the coalition government had been working with "fewer problems than expected" given the bitter political divide that separated the coalition partners during the election campaign and the post-election crisis just a few months ago. Although he described the arrangement as "not a love affair," he described the establishment of new oversight committees, the launch of the revised "Vision 2030" development plan, and his weekly meetings with President Kibaki as evidence that the coalition is getting on with the busy agenda before it.

¶6. (U) Odinga expressed concern about food shortages later this year due to disruption in the planting season caused by the post-election crisis and inadequate rains. He also described the progress to date of the independent commissions set up to investigate the conduct of the elections and the violence associated with the crisis. He stressed the importance of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission that is still being formed, noting that it would likely follow

the South African model and would seek to heal the hatred and mistrust between different ethnic communities in Kenya.

IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORM

¶17. (C) Odinga briefed the Secretary on the government's plans to create a new constitution that would address some of the underlying issues that contributed to the political crisis. His ambitious goal is to produce a new draft, submit it for Parliamentary approval, and hold a national referendum on the revised text by April 2009 (the one-year anniversary of the swearing-in of the coalition cabinet). Odinga also noted that several expert commissions are currently studying the issue of reforming Kenya's land tenure system. The government is planning to hold a national conference on land reform issues later this year.

TOUGH TALK FROM ODINGA ON ZIMBABWE

¶18. (C) Odinga noted that he has become "enemy #1" in Zimbabwe since his recent public comments in Cape Town. He agreed with the Secretary that President Mbeki should take a leadership role on the Zimbabwe issue. He discussed the situation of his sister and her husband, who used to run a successful bus company in Zimbabwe but were forced to abandon the business and return to Kenya when the conditions there became untenable. The Secretary mentioned her ongoing efforts to persuade the UN Security Council to put Zimbabwe on its agenda, and encouraged Odinga to speak to other African leaders about engaging with Russia and China on the need for the Council to intervene in Zimbabwe. Odinga noted his personal friendship with the Libyan Minister responsible for Africa, Al Treki, and offered to reach out to him and urge Libya to be more helpful on Zimbabwe issues in its role on the Security Council.

ASSISTANCE REQUESTED FOR URBAN SLUM UPGRADING, PM'S OFFICE

¶19. (U) Odinga appealed to the Secretary for U.S. assistance in jump starting a previously planned program for slum upgrades in the Kibera area of Nairobi. (Note: Home to some 1 million people, the vast Kibera slum was a major flashpoint for post-election violence and makes up a large portion of Odinga's parliamentary constituency. End note.) Odinga described the program as coordinated by UN Habitat, with the financial participation of a consortium of donors and the Kenyan government. The project would encompass razing large areas of Kibera and relocating residents to new developments with decent housing, roads, electricity, water, sanitation, schools, and other facilities.

¶10. (C) However, Odinga noted that the project had been stalled since 2003 when expected donors funds did not materialize. He asked whether MCC Compact funding could be used for this project. The Secretary noted that, while we hoped to move towards a full Compact with Kenya in the next two to three years, the process takes time. She added that MCC might be able to assist with later phases of the envisioned multi-phase project, and that we would look into the possibility of supporting slum upgrading projects. Odinga thanked the Secretary for the United States' pledge of \$500,000 for capacity building of the newly created Office of the Prime Minister, and expressed the need for additional support, particularly in the areas of staff capacity and information technology infrastructure.

MOUNT ELGON HUMAN RIGHTS ALLEGATIONS

¶11. (C) At the end of the meeting, Odinga invited Minister of Defense Yusuf Haji to brief the Secretary on the recent allegations that serious human rights abuses were committed by Kenyan security forces during recent

military operations against local militias in the volatile Mount Elgon region of western Kenya. While he stopped short of blaming the police for reported atrocities, Minister Haji noted the similarity in the police and military uniforms and stressed that he is open to hearing any evidence of abuses by military personnel. Haji said that he asked the Office of the President to appoint independent investigators to look at whether there were any abuses by the military. If any such abuses were uncovered, he added, perpetrators would be court-martialled and punished appropriately.

RICE